

What is claimed is:

1. A method for detecting inter-carrier looping in a first communication network, said method comprising the steps of:
 - receiving a call with a network counter value, where said network counter value is representative of a number of networks that said call has traversed;
 - determining whether said network counter value is equal to a threshold value; and
 - terminating said call if said network counter value is equal to said threshold value.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said call is terminated by an access switch of the first communication network.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the communication network is using a SS7 signaling protocol, where said network counter value is carried within an initial address message (IAM).
4. The method of claim 3, wherein said network counter value is carried within a Hop Counter parameter.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein said network counter value is carried within a plurality of unused bits of said Hop Counter parameter.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein said Hop Counter parameter further carries a hop counter value representative of a number of interexchange circuits that are allowed to complete said call.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein said threshold value is selectively set to a value between 1 to 7.
8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

incrementing said network counter value to a new network counter value if said network counter value is not equal to said threshold value.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising:
forwarding said new network counter value and said call to at least one intermediate switch of the first communication network or to an access switch of a second communication network.
10. The method of claim 9, wherein said second communication network is an interconnecting or an egress carrier.
11. The method of claim 9, wherein said new network counter value is not incremented by said at least one intermediate switch.
12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
setting an initial value to said network counter value if said network counter value is not set and said network counter value is needed for an outgoing message.
13. The method of claim 1, wherein said terminating said call comprises:
releasing said call with a release message with a cause value representative of an exchange routing error.
14. An apparatus for detecting inter-carrier looping in a communication network, said apparatus comprising:
means for receiving a call with a network counter value, where said network counter value is representative of a number of networks that said call has traversed;
means for determining whether said network counter value is equal to a threshold value; and
means for terminating said call if said network counter value is equal to said threshold value.

15. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein said apparatus is an access switch of the communication network.

16. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the communication network is using a SS7 signaling protocol, where said network counter value is carried within an initial address message (IAM).

17. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein said network counter value is carried within a Hop Counter parameter.

18. The apparatus of claim 14, further comprising:

means for incrementing said network counter value to a new network counter value if said network counter value is not equal to said threshold value.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, further comprising:

means for forwarding said new network counter value and said call to an intermediate switch of the first communication network or to an access switch of a second communication network.

20. A computer-readable medium having stored thereon a plurality of instructions, the plurality of instructions including instructions which, when executed by a processor, cause the processor to perform the steps comprising of:

receiving a call with a network counter value, where said network counter value is representative of a number of networks that said call has traversed;

determining whether said network counter value is equal to a threshold value; and

terminating said call if said network counter value is equal to said threshold value.